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THE

BATTLE OF CANNÆ,

AND

TERRIBLE OVERTHROW OF THE ROMAN ARMY;

AN

Historical Poem and Diagram,

SHOWING THE POSITIONS OF BOTH ARMIES DRAWN UP IN ORDER FOR BATTLE.

WITH SHORT NOTES OF EXPLANATION.

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DEDICATED

TO

MAJOR GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT,

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

OF

UNITED STATES ARMY.

PREFACE.

This small Poem is offered to the public without any formal introduction or explanation of the inducements of the author, (expecting the reader to ascribe its publication to vanity,) with the remark that it was composed for the amusement of a few leisure hours.

If it should not amuse or instruct the unlearned reader in Heathen Mythology, or give a true account, so far as it goes, of the manner of fighting before the use of fire-arms; the brutal neglect of the remains of the slain, and inhuman treatment of prisoners before the Christian era, the design of its publication will be a failure.

War in those days was no half way measure, that could generally be closed by negotiation as now, but was waged for conquest and total subjugation. Prisoners were considered the properties of the captors and sold into perpetual slavery or used as gladiators for public amusement and improvement of courage at Rome. The discovery of gunpowder has lessened

the horrors of war, by reducing the number of slain more than one-half. Engagements are fought with artillery and small arms at sufficient distances to give the worsted army an opportunity of retreating in tolerable order before it is routed and of carrying off their wounded. The rules of modern warfare allow the dead to be buried by their friends. Prisoners are not ransomed or sold into slavery but exchanged or detained until the ratification of peace.

Before the introduction of gunpowder, both armies charged up, butting their shields together with a shock that overturned numbers on both sides who never rose again, for it was difficult to get up in their armour when left alone, and impossible with their antagonists standing over them. The engagement along its whole line was a series of single combats, sustained with great physical exertion. Almost every battle was decisive, because nearly all the routed army were overtaken and slain, except a few taken prisoners for slaves or gladiators. There was no escape except by flight, (which was next to impossible,) or by killing the enemy. To use slang terms, there was no backing out after the charge was sounded and the routed army was generally used up.

Every school boy knows the battle of Cannæ was fought on the 21st of May, 216 years before the birth

of Christ. Historians differ about the particulars of this great battle, but all agree about the overthrow and terrible slaughter of the Roman army, and the comparatively small loss on the side of the Carthagenians. Livy computes the number of Romans and their confederates slain, at upwards of eighty thousand foot and five thousand four hundred horse. Again he states, "at Cannæ, scarcely seventy accompanied the Consul who fled, almost the whole army perished with the other Consul." We take these to be the seventy Knights who returned with Varro to Rome. All the Carthagenian histories were destroyed when the City was taken and burned by the Romans, and the ground ploughed up.

The plan of the battle as stated by Livy, is very confused. The Diagram of both armies set in battle array is drawn as nearly as convenient, from the account given in the Encyclopedia Brittannica, which describes more clearly than any history we have seen, the manner in which the snare was set, and the Roman army drawn into it, and surrounded by such an inferior number of Carthagenian troops, by the military genius of Hannibal.

The two thousand confederate horsemen who faught with the Knights are called Tuscans, which may be a mistake, but they were from some part of Italy,

if not from Tuscany. Livy does not inform us particularly or give them any other name than that of natives and confederates. The Knights lived in the City, and the other horsemen somewhere in the surrounding country.

According to Gibbon, the fatigues and duties of a Roman warrior would overwhelm the delicacy of a modern soldier. Every man of the legion carried about sixty pounds weight of armour with a pick axe and grubbing hoe, and cooking utensil on his back, and marched one hundred miles a day. This seems incredible at first view, (although Cæsar says his army in Gaul performed equally long marches.) But when we consider that the Roman mile was measured by one thousand paces, it was not half so long as an English mile. Every soldier was obliged to bathe himself three times a week in summer, if water was to be procured.

Gibbon states, that during the period of the empire, and long anterior to it the custom was to strip the dead bodies of enemies and leave them on top of the ground to be devoured by dogs and vultures, which in those days enjoyed many such delicious feasts, &c. Livy does not inform us in positive terms whether the Romans slain at Cannæ were buried or not, but it must have been a fact that they were not buried.

Livy says Hannibal ordered his soldiers to search for and bury all their dead, who amounted to eight thousand of his best troops, and that it was reported he ordered the body of one of the Roman Consuls to be buried, and leaves us to conclude he did not bury others belonging to the Roman army. Besides, no living Romans, except prisoners, were left there to bury the dead. Their whole army was slain, taken, or had disappeared. If Hannibal had ordered the Roman prisoners to bury the dead, so unusual an occurrence would have been noticed by Livy, or Polybius. Wherefore the statement in the Poem, that they were devoured by the wolves and buzzards is true to the best of our belief, particularly as this was the usual way of disposing of dead enemies, unless their bodies were ransomed, which we cannot believe the Roman Senate would have done, because the Senate refused to ransom the prisoners at Hannibal's offer, to save them from being slaughtered in the Arena. If the Roman State cared so little for their living, no respect was entertained for the dead.

Hannibal agreed with some of the prisoners about the price of their liberty, and sent ten of them on their parole of honor to Rome, to prevail on the Senate to pay the ransom. The relatives of the prisoners, men, women and children surrounded the

Forum, and entreated the Senate with loud lamentations to redeem them from destruction. But the Senate after debate with closed doors, refused to advance the money from the State Treasury, and these prisoners were abandoned to their fate, and all perished by the swords of each other. How could the Roman Senate be guilty of such gross inhumanity and ingratitude?

Some of the Roman prisoners Hannibal sent on their parole of honor, to return to his camp if they could not prevail on the Senate to ransom them, having failed in their mission, were disposed to remain in Rome; but the Senate ordered them all to return, and they were chased out of the City and obliged to deliver themselves up to the tender mercies of enterprising Hannibal.

The name of Adah appears in Genesis, as one of the wives of Lamech. According to profane history Ada was queen of Caria, and in later days she appears as the daughter of poet Byron. None of these are alluded to in this work, only a beautiful and talented, but fickle acquaintance of the writer. As almost every river had its classic deity, and the author being uninformed who was the tutelary Goddess of the Aufidus, conferred this title on her name without authority.

Prefaces and introductions are tedious and seldom read, but it is considered proper not to conclude this one, without making a few remarks about the Mythological doctrine of the work, for fear of being misunderstood. Destiny is introduced in the rhymes as the overruling Power to which men and Gods were subjected. After they were written, Lempriere's Classical Dictionary was searched and Encyclopœdia Americana in vain, to find the classical definition of Destiny or Fate. Rand's Encyclopœdia of Science has a short definition of Destiny, and refers to Reed's Encyclopœdia. Banier's Mythology has an accurate definition of Destiny. No person can have an intelligent conception of the beginning, end, and true spirit of Heathen Mythology, without ascribing to Destiny the attribute of an overruling Power. The three sisters called Parcæ or Fates, are not the Power here alluded to as overruling the Gods. One of them held a distaff, another the spindle, and the third the scissors to clip the thread of *human life.* The acknowledgment by the Heathens of the existence of Destiny is proof that they were not satisfied about the reality or sufficiency of Jupiter and their other classical divinities, but looked beyond them for a supreme ruler greater and better than all of them. Any attempt to explain Mythology without noticing

Destiny, (sometimes called Fate,) is futile, as it would be to preach the Christian religion, without connecting it with the Eternal Ruler of the Universe. The fact is the Heathens believed in the existence of a *real* God, and so do all the Barbarians, who at present inhabit the earth.

In proof of this the reader is referred to the history of Saturn, who attempted to destroy all his children, because the Oracle of Fate declared that his throne in Heaven would be usurped by one of them, which was done by Jupiter. Homer afterwards makes Jupiter say he would be glad to save Sarpedon. But Μοιρα, Greek for Fate or Destiny, had decreed otherwise, and Juno advises him not to attempt so rash an act. Many other Greek and some Roman authors concede the same attribute to Destiny.

Lucian in his dialogue betwixt Minos and Sesostris, represents the latter as a guilty spirit brought before the former for trial. Sesostris argued his own case and succeeded in convincing the Judge that all the wickedness he ever perpetrated was done under the power of Destiny, which he could not resist. On this special plea the Judge dismissed the culprit with an injunction not to let it be known for what reason he was acquitted, lest every sinner

should claim exemption from punishment on the same pretext, &c. Destiny and Fate in their ordinary meaning are to be found in all the English Dictionaries, and defined in so far as they are applicable to the affairs of men, but not in their mythological sense as the overruling Power of the Heathen Deities. It is not contemplated to write a dissertation on the subject, but only to inform the reader what meaning the author intended to convey by the word Destiny.

As something has been said in the verses about burning the bodies of the dead, it is not irrelevant to make a few remarks about the manner and effect of this very ancient custom. When the dead body had been washed and anointed, they proceeded to wrap it in a cloak, and sometimes in a cloth made of asbestus, to prevent the remains of the body from being so mixed with the ashes of the wood as to be inseparable. It was then placed on top of the funeral pile and consumed by fire. When the asbestus cloth was unrolled, the corruptible flesh was found to be entirely consumed, or more accurately speaking, had escaped to the pristine elements that composed it. The white frame work of bones, with a handful of ashes of calcined lime, was all that then remained of the proud fabric of man.

These ashes and bones were put into urns and placed on the mantels beside the Penates, or deposited in vaults. Gladiators were engaged to fight and kill each other, while the funeral piles of great men were burning, from the idle fancy that the ghosts of the deceased would be rendered propitious by human blood. Burning was a most beautiful manner of disposing of the dead. All gnawing of worms, rottenness and stench, was purified or rather prevented. But wood was too scarce to burn all who fell in battle, or died natural deaths. It required two cords of pitch wood to burn a body enclosed in a cloth of asbestus, which could not be procured for any but the rich, they were therefore obliged to inter the poor.

We have heard of several cases of burning the dead in modern times. An old gentleman died on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, about a century ago, named Holiday, who injoined the Executors of his will to burn his body on three cords of hickory wood, and strew his ashes to the four winds of Heaven. We are not certain that his will was executed as directed by the testator.

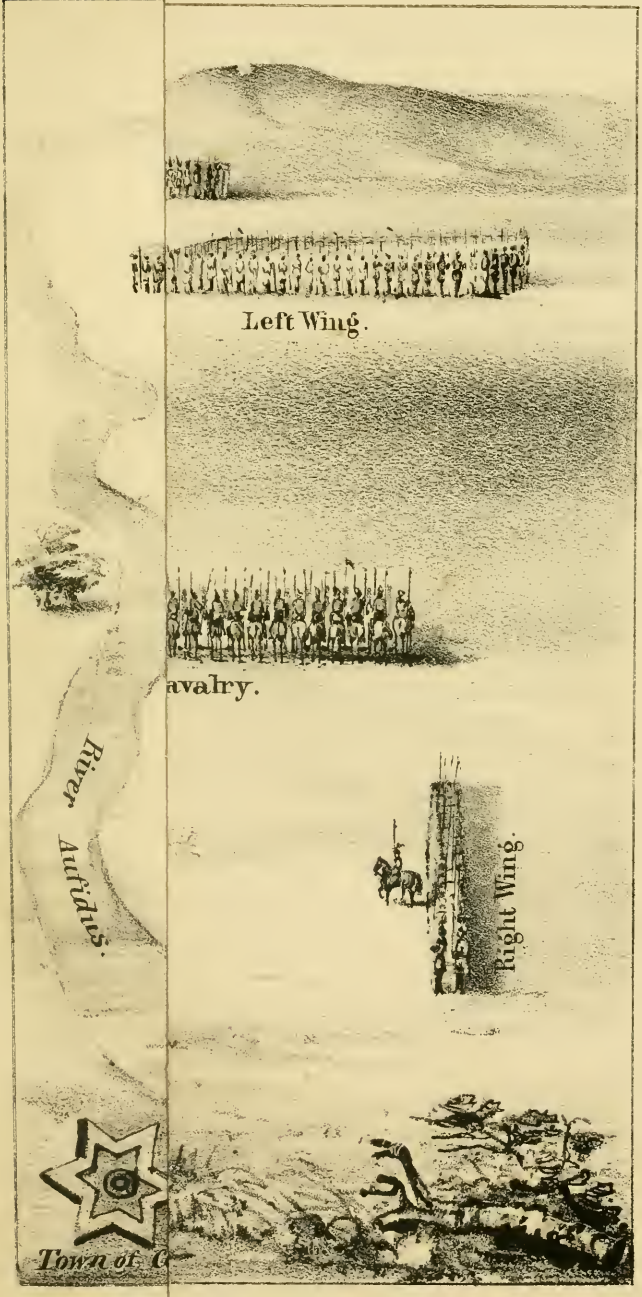
Henry Laurens, a native of Charleston, S. C. was a man of distinction in history. In 1774, he was chosen President of the Council of Safety. In 1776,

chosen a delegate to Congress and elected President of Congress. He was appointed Minister to Holland in 1779. He was sent as Minister with Benjamin Franklin and John Jay, to negotiate peace with England in 1782, at Paris, and died in 1792, at the age of 70 years.

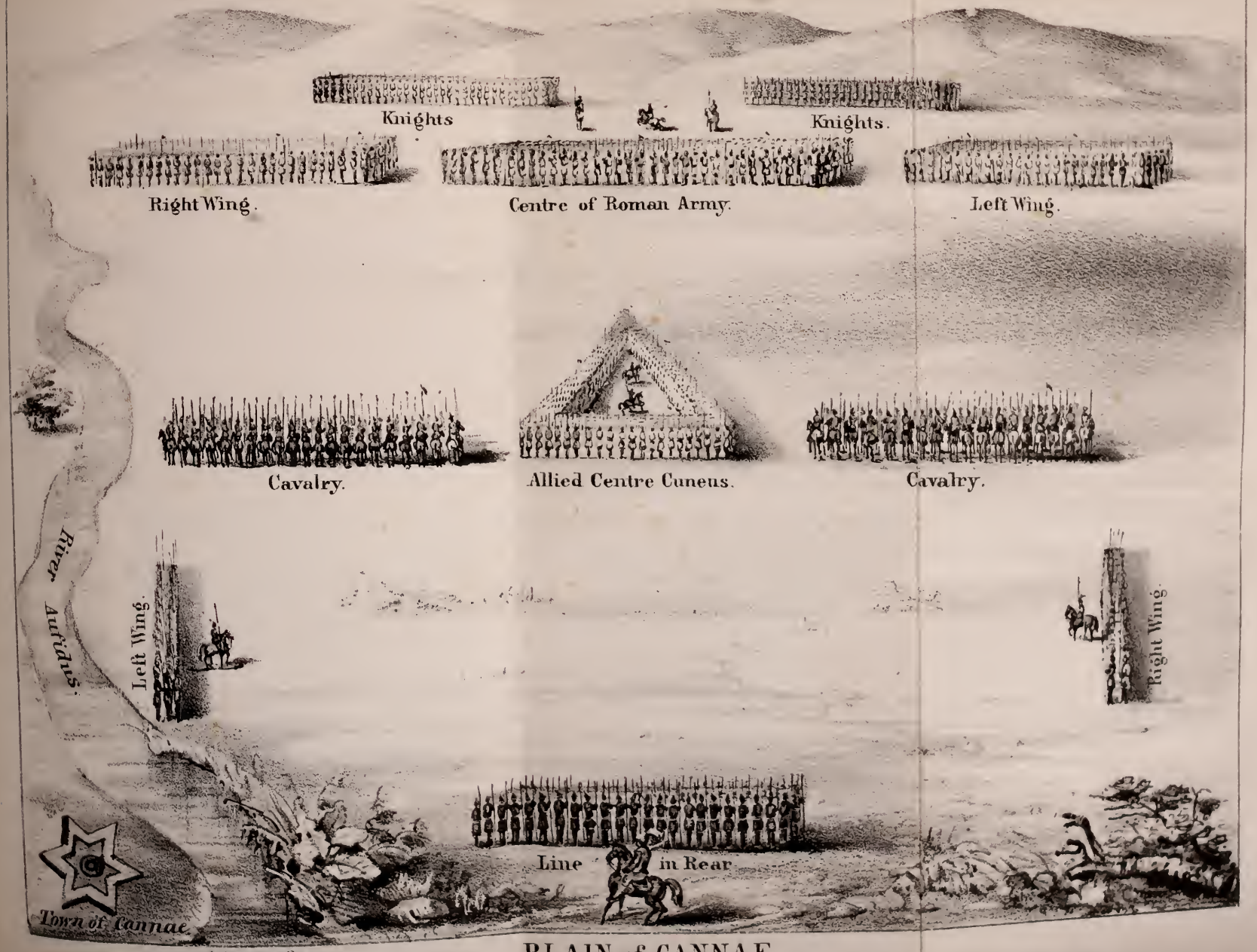
According to his will, his body was burnt on a funeral pile, and his bones collected and buried. Notice of his will may be found in Weems' Life of Washington, one of the most patriotic and amusing histories ever written in this country. Which we are sorry to say is nearly out of print. Weems says Laurens expresses in his will, that his body was too good for the worms, and therefore, he directs it to be burnt. He is not the only historian who states this fact, it may be found in all the American Histories and Biographies, and no doubt is true. There are many instances of burning the dead amongst the North American Red Men, but unfortunately it is not the custom amongst the whites in the Western States and Territories, where they are obliged to burn the wood when they clear the ground for agricultural purposes. A silly superstitious notion prevails against burning the dead, from fear that the particles being consumed by fire, cannot be brought together again on the day of resurrection.

It should be recollected that every body by its decomposition is separated into its original elements.

The Frontispiece represents Hamilcar swearing Hannibal on the altar at nine years of age, to wage eternal war against Rome. It may well be doubted whether this oath, imposed on him before he had arrived at years of discretion, was binding, but he adopted it when he arrived at age, and no one can doubt the extraordinary manner in which he performed it. This engraving was designed by a talented artist of fifteen years of age, who drafted the Diagram of the order of Battle at the end of the Poem, if such it deserves to be styled.


Left Wing.
avalry.
River Aufidus.
Right Wing.
Town of C

Roman Army.



PLAIN of CANNAE.

THE

BATTLE OF CANNÆ.

Aurora spread her Eastern light,
As Hannibal arrived in sight,
To pitch his camp on Cannæ's plain
When shall such army come again
With Punic banners raised in air,
Offering Rome a battle there?
The cavalry rode front and rear,
To chase the enemy if near,
From Numidea, Spain and Gaul,
Ten thousand numbering in all.
Maherbal master of the horse,
Hated old Rome without remorse,

And never any quarters gave,
To vanquished Romans, nor a grave.
The legions in the centre moved,
Whose prowess many a battle proved,
With helmets, shields, bright swords or darts,
And best of weapons, fearless hearts,
Like a river of steel, the throng,
In perfect order rolled along.
While every veteran kept his post,
Dead silence reign'd o'er all the host,
Like stillness that precedes earthquakes,
Until a martial blast awakes,
With sudden shock, the first alarms,
That Hannibal was under arms;
From off the mountains moving down,
To take possession of the town.

From Canusium, five miles away,
The Roman army came next day,
Six thousand knights in proud array,

With two thousand Tuscan horse,
Comprised their whole equestrian force.
Plebeian legions followed on,
Outnumbering Carthage three to one.
Such confidence do numbers give,
They vow'd no ally should outlive,
The gathering storm that lower'd,
When Hannibal was overpower'd.
Their victory was all a dream,
His martial genius kick'd the beam.

Now the sun was rising slow,
As yet Vulturnus* did not blow,
But far in regions of the west,
With folded wings was lull'd to rest.
Apulia's sky was all serene,
The Aufidus† there ran between,
The hostile armies, on each side,
As if it would from strife divide.

* See Note 1. † See Note 2.

Infernal shame that man should mar,
Such peaceful scenes by storms of war!

Old Varro, (he that was not slain,)
Drew out his army on the plain,
Extending straight two miles in length,
And form'd three deep to give it strength.
In front Hastati* waved the spear,
The Principes stood next and near,
Triarii made up the rear.
His right wing rested on the bank,
Betwixt his centre and each flank,
Were vacant spaces left to bring,
The knights in front of either wing.
Three Roman Consuls in the field,
This day's command to Varro yield.
Æmelius the right wing led,
The left hand Paulus at its head,
Behind the centre rode Varro

* See Note 3.

Their boastful generalissimo.
Near to him on left and right
The knights divided for the fight,
Each division took its place,
Fronting on a vacant space.
Five score thousand legionaries,
Besides eight thousand brave equerries,
And we must add to all of these,
Archers light, and Baliares.
Such dreadful numbers on that day,
The Romans marshal'd for the fray.

The Allies who at Cannæ were,
Had forded Aufidus down there,
And unperceived some miles below,
Were moving up against Varro,
With steady tramp their march pursued,
In sight of where his centre stood,
And there a horrid pause ensued.

Forty thousand foot, no more,
Ten thousand horse, (as said before,)
Were all the troops the Allies had,
But Hannibal was at their head.
Who formed his army on that day
In a most unusual way,
His centre shaped triangular,
Beyond his wings projected far,
His wings were spread out far and wide,
Fronting his centre on each side,
Behind his centre not too near,
Another line stood in its rear.
The horse drew up and filled the space
Each side the centre near its base.
The central *cuneus** stood out clear,
From all its allies in the rear,
Resting on the Roman centre,
Which it seem'd designed to enter,
A *cuneus* shaped to make a breach,
But kept its distance out of reach,

* See Note 4.

This centre any way could face,
And move about at rapid pace.
Its troops all Gauls and Spaniards were,
With Hannibal and Mago there.
The Carthagenians were not near
But posted on the wings and rear.
The left wing Hasdrubal displayed,
Upon the right Maherbal laid.
Waiting the proper time to close,
Both wings on their surrounded foes.
His stratagem was also laid
To take advantage of the aid
Expected from a neutral force
That every day pursued his course,
Over the wide and arid plain,
Which for months received no rain,
In that season of the year,
When the sun is hot and clear.
His rapid wings had mighty powers,
To drive the dust in blinding showers.

He rose at noon to greatest height,
But never early or at night.
The wily Hannibal well knew,
Which way and when Vulturnus blew,
And marched the allies in his track,
To take the dust upon their back.
The Roman army in its place,
Had this galling wind to face,
Or turn their backs upon the foe,
Which might cause their overthrow;
Thus Vulturnus made a very
Sure and cheap auxiliary.

The centres were two hours in sight,
Without approaching to a fight,
But looking at each other stood,
As if they paused to spill their blood.
The Roman Senate had decreed,
Terentius Varro should proceed,

And force great Hannibal to meet
Superior numbers, or retreat.
The Roman army being large,
He expected they would charge,
And stood provoking their attack,
Intending from it to fall back,
And draw them in the ambuscade,
Betwixt his wings and centre laid,
But they began a distant fight
With engines, slings, and arrows light.
With all their strength the archers drew,
But short their farthest arrows flew.
The Baleares* next unfurled,
And storms of hissing bullets hurled,
Their engines threw out every sort
Of roaring missiles, which fell short;
For Hannibal with practis'd eye,
Measured how far projectiles fly,

* See Note 5.

And not intending to exchange,
Halted his centre out of range.
Their light troops dar'd not come up near,
Dreading swift horsemen in his rear,
There Hannibal remained at bay,
Making no movement any way,
But in his centre coiled to make
A hidden spring, like venom'd snake.

The haughty knights impatient grew,
And their army all rushed through,
Imprudently to court the brunt
Of allied cavalry in front.
They scarcely got upon front ground,
Before they heard a bugle sound,
They heard it once, a signal knell,
Like charging trump of Gabriel,*
And saw the cavalry advance,
On fiery steeds at point of lance.

* See Note 6.

Every gallant Roman knight,
Bore up bravely to the fight,
And met the cavalry half way,
Betwixt the armies in the fray,
Where they met with double force,
Of frantic man and plunging horse.
From driving lance and ringing shield,
The shock was heard beyond the field.
Betwixt the armies on the plain,
There was not room to wheel again,
Both sides dismounted on the spot,
Resolved to fight it out on foot.
The knights were brave as men could be,
But did not match the cavalry,
Either in numbers or in skill;
The cavalry had perfect drill,
And long inured to war's alarms,
Every day had practised arms.
At first to learn, sham battles faught,
Till every man was fully taught,

To ride his stallion and to fence,
And many a real battle since,
Hardened them to laugh at slaughter,
When spilling blood like water.
While they were grappling man to man,
Their steeds in wild disorder ran,
Raising on the field one more,
Frightful scene of wild uproar.
The knights with chivalry assailed,
But all their bravest efforts failed,
Against their vetran Roman haters,
Who faught by rule like gladiators;
Adroitly parrying with lance,
Knew when to fall back or advance,
And watching close their foemen's eyes,
Were seldom stricken by surprise;
Received the swords of knights on steel,
And quick returning made them feel
The fatal stab, and fainting reel.
Blows of battle axes given,
By force of both hands driven,

Too furiously for them to meet,
By throwing back fell at their feet,
Before the knights recovered guard,
Cut them down with lance or sword.
(Thus Mattadores with bulls can play,
And strike the nick of time to slay.)
While this furious combat raged,
None but horsemen were engaged,
As they filled up the centre space,
The infantry remained in place,
Cheering with many a loud hurra,
Their friends to fight and win the day.
The Roman knights were falling fast,
But kept up fighting to the last.
Their chivalry had not availed,
The cavalry at length prevailed,
By numbers and by perfect skill,
In use of weapons made to kill.
Prizing victory more than life,
The knights prolong'd the desp'rate strife.

Vulturnus then began to rise,
And dimm'd with dust their fiery eyes,
They seldom saw who gave the blow,
That hurled them to the shades below.
Through clouds of dust that hid the sun,
'Twas hard to see what had been done.
After the clash of arms had ceased,
And rolling clouds of dust decreased,
They saw the cavalry remain,
To catch their horses on the plain,
Then riding over knights who lay,
All prostrate in their bloody way,
Exulted loud with savage glee,
As they returned to their army,
Which hailed them victors back once more,
With louder shouts than tempests roar.
While seventy Roman knights alone,
Escaped from death behind their own.
Three hundred of the Tuscans fled,
The rest were numbered with the dead.

Let Patrician matrons weep,
And loving maids their vigils keep,
Offering sacrifice to Mars,
To bring them safe from hated wars.
For sons and lovers look in vain,
Conquer'd, dispers'd, trod down and slain,
They fought their last on Cannæ's plain.
Victims of war, there they must lay
Unburied, to be stript next day.

When Romans saw the knights were kill'd,
Their hearts with indignation thrill'd,
And all their army stung with rage
At once determined to engage.
Expecting to surround and crush
The allied Cuneus by a rush,
No prudence could their rage deter,
Nor fear of any *ruse de guerre*.

But Hannibal his wings fled through,
And like a sinking maelstrom drew,
Their chasing army flanks and all,
After his flying centre small,
Compared with overwhelming foes,
Eager round it with death to close.
They for vengence still pursued,
And he continued to elude,
Until the Romans all were seen
To pass his wings half way between,
And then he halted on the plain,
As if his courage came again,
Where like a solitary rock,
He stood to breast the coming shock.
The veterans round him tried and good,
His strategy well understood,
And all in silence took their breath,
Prepared for victory or death.
The rash impetuous Romans came,
With brandished arms and eyes of flame,

Surrounding him at one fell sweep,
With legionaries thirty deep.
His steady centre held its ground,
Against their clashing troops around,
Who attacked its outer border,
Crowding each other in disorder.
Jamm'd in the Roman legions tight,
None but the men in front could fight,
And they pressed on, could not fall back
To shun a vigorous attack.
Betwixt his centre ranks was space,
To fight, fall back and to retrace;
His troops in centre undismayed,
Faught with hope expecting aid,
From both their wings, and line in rear,
Which they could see were drawing near,
But which the furious Romans blind,
Saw not advancing from behind,
Until they felt their fierce attacks
All round at once upon their backs.

Their army smote inside and out,
In wild disorder faced about.
And then perceived with black despair,
That they were taken in a snare;
Betwixt his wings and centre tossed,
That victory and life were lost.
Paulus and Æmelius fell.
Leading their wings, and sunk to Hell,
(If any heathen word there be
Like Hell that means eternity.)
The Roman courage did not fail,
But they were cut off in detail;
They had to face about in squads,
And lost advantage of the odds,
That numbers always will exert,
When brought to bear in firm concert;
To fight his Cuneus sides and rear,
And brush their crowded legions clear,
Of Carthagenian wings outside,
All their numerous host defied.

The Roman army faught three hours.
Struggling hard with all its powers,
Against the inevitable fate,
Which Hannibal had laid in wait.
On six lines the battle raged,
The inner Romans were engaged,
Against his cuneus, sides and rear,
Which they surrounded and were near;
Their outer ranks must face or fall,
Before his wings outside of all,
Except remaining cavalry,
Who having killed the knights that day,
Now charged the legions every way,
From left to right, in front and rear,
Putting the Romans to the spear.
Their Spanish stallions spurr'd and train'd,
With all their fire the fight maintained;
Upon the Roman legions turned,
With iron hoofs their armor spurned.

Kick'd down the fighting on the dead,
Pursued and ran down those who fled.
The horsemen traversed all the field,
Rejoiced to see the Romans yield
Their lives, in such a desperate cause,
On their destruction roared applause.
Like Romans in the Circus met,
When gladiators threw the net,
And women to the Circus ran,
Enjoying sight of dying man;
Slaves or prisoners, Gaul and Hun,
Scourged to fight, and die for fun.
The Roman knights whom they dispatch'd,
Often had their prisoners matched,
Like game cocks for the ring,
Weighed and prized for murdering.
Since the time of Tarquin's court,
This had been a Roman sport,
Until the Christian law divine,
Enforced by Emperor Constantine.

"When Coliseum falls Rome falls,"
Despite her battlements and walls.
It was Rome's military school,
There art of war was taught by rule,
And practically learned the best,
Where students faught and died in jest.
The cavalry enjoyed the sight,
Of Romans perishing in fight,
For Coliseum was their doom,
If they went prisoners to Rome,
In the arena to engage,
Ferocious beast turned from his cage;
Or what was worse, friend and brother,
Forced to fight and slay each other,
To amuse the ignoble crowd,
With senators and ladies proud.

While Rome in cruelty refined,
Barbarians kept their natural mind,

This was the darkest age of all,
"It was man's worst his second fall;"
No other city upon earth,
To such inhuman sports gave birth.
The Allies fought in nature's cause,
Against Rome's bloody Circus laws.
Betwixt his wings and centre caught,
The Romans in disorder fought,
From first to last could not recover,
But they were slain, and battle over.
Remembering Coliseum dire,
The Allies with a natural ire,—
Which suspended fear increases—
Hewed the Romans into pieces.
In their terrible overthrow,
Made Roman blood in rivers flow.
When wings and cuneus in the fray,
Through Roman army cut their way,
And met each other in the list,
For joy the reeking warriors kiss'd,

Embracing in their coats of mail,
With echoing shouts their victory hail.
The Romans could escape no way,
Except through wings and cavalry,
Plebeian Varro slipt the snare,
Historians say (if he was there,)
With seventy knights got back to Rome
And ever after staid at home.
Ten thousand of the Romans yield,
Cried misericordia on the field;
Small remnant of their mighty host,
The rest were missing, slain and lost,
Who beamed with hope at early morn,
Better that they had not been born.
A common death the Romans shared,
No wounded foe the horsemen spared.
Now Hannibal the slaughter stayed,
His commands the troops obeyed,
Remaining Romans prisoners made.

"And now the weari'd sun goes down"
In glorious clouds of red and brown,
"And now the hurly-burly's done,
And the battle's lost and won."
Surviving victors of the day,
All spent the night in revelry,
To celebrate their victory,
In libations deep to Mars,
For like success in future wars.

The midnight moon with pallid beam,
Depicted on the field and stream,
Unearthly sights, as they would seem,
The phantoms of a baseless dream.
The battle field and reeking shore,
With dead legions covered o'er,
Where they had fallen the day before.
Eighty thousand Romans lay,
And their confederates, sad display,
Of warriors slaughtered yesterday.

Eight thousand of the Allies fell,
And with the Romans lay pell mell,
Their cloven shields and heads strewn round,
In wild disorder on the ground.
This awful field of wasted life,
Gave no returning signs of strife,
With life hostilities must cease,
Death reigned now profound in peace.
Grim foemen there together rest,
The bearded Gaul on Roman's breast,
Embraced like lovers newly blest;
On beds of dust with weapons gory,
Left the world for its false glory.

Far up the stream the knights were seen,
And their dead foemen stretched between,
One thousand of the cavalry there,
Reposing with them in the air.

Each man had shed his little rill
Of life's blood first, and laid down still.
Their crippled chargers neighing loud,
Evoked the echoes from a cloud,
Which wildly answered them in vain,
For those who ne'er could speak again.
The rapid Aufidus was dyed,
With streaks of blood on either side,
Down to the Adriatic's tide.
Ada goddess of the river,
Fled her sacred stream for ever,
Which in its bosom used before
To shadow scenes from sky and shore,
Topsy turvy in its magic wave;
A mirror and a bath to lave.
Italia's dark-eyed daughters,
In its flood of crystal waters.
Since Cannæ's called and understood
Pezzo di sanque "Field of blood."

Two battles (so historians say,)
Have since been fought at red Cannæ,
Both skirmishes to this affray.

At early dawn the deadly plain,
Began to swarm with life again.
The Allied victors came to see,
And reap the spoils of victory.
Three bushels of gold rings they tore,
From fingers of the knights, who wore
These badges of their honor great,
Conferred upon them by the state.
They stript their enemies all bare,
For hungry dogs and vulture's fare.
In those days the birds and beasts
Had many such delicious feasts,
And followed armies on their way
In countless numbers every day,
Howling and watching for their prey,

The vultures first were over head,
Soaring round the field of dead,
With every other carrion bird,
And packs of howling dogs were heard,
Coming to devour the slain,
Stript naked on the lurid plain.
Who would have been a soldier then
Made food for beasts by savage men?
"On sober second thought" why not?
Worms eat us all before we rot,
Unless we're purified entire,
On funeral piles consum'd by fire.
The allies buried all their friends,
And with these rites their duty ends.

Sepulchral rites in early days
Were sacred held, (so Homer says,)
If illustrious men expired,
Then the funeral piles were fired;

And gladiators faught all round,
To consecrate with blood the ground;
While others of ignoble birth,
Were buried in their mother Earth.
When their ethereal spirits fled,
Friends burnt or buried all the dead,
Or they could never enter where,
The blest Elysian spirits were.
Such was immutable decree,
Of Over-ruling Destiny.
Yet these religious obsequies,
Were not perform'd for enemies,
But to friends alone were given,
As their passports into heaven.
Whene'er a routed army fled,
To save themselves, they left their dead,
The dogs devoured them where they fell,
Their troubled spirits went to Hell:
Not with the happy shades to mix,
Because they could not cross the Styx,

Which nine times flowed around,
Th' Elysian Fields enchanted ground.
Until their bones were buried here,
Their spirits were delay'd down there,
A hundred years outside the river,
Wandering round it, seemed for ever.
No present hope to guild their grief,
Not even Death to bring relief.
Charon would not pass them over,
The dark unnavigable River.
Whether they were good or bad,
Before that time no trial had.
This Purgatory Heathens made,
For all whose bones unburied laid.

Tartarus was a part of Hell,
Where guilty damn'd spirits dwell,
Æcus and Rhadamanthus were,
Inferior Judges sitting there.

Supreme was Minos Judge of men,
(They had no Jury trials then,)
And no delay when sentence pass'd,
But into utter darkness cast,
Past redemption, for the future
Writh'd and tossed in endless torture;
Down in those Infernal Regions,
Where the Devils swarm'd in legions.
Without a friend who sympathiz'd,
On earth forgotten or despised.
Whatever Minos judged was right,
No God could pardon or respite.
Dark picture Heathen writers draw,
Of Hell's inexorable law.
Its terrors may have done some good,
But did not stop their shedding blood.

Th' Elysian Fields was happy place,
For all the good who died in grace.

There they dwelt from troubles free,
In glorious immortality.
Their sky was bright, and pure the air,
They had no wants and felt no care,
Mid cooling shades, and purling brooks,
They took no food and read no books,
For immaterial sparks require,
No fuel to revive their fire.
No books or prophets there to doubt,
All was reveal'd to them without,
And universal knowledge knew,
From all creation spread in view.
Toiled not by day, nor slept at night
To lose one moment of delight.
In tranquil state of idleness,
Enjoyed perpetual happiness.
(On earth such calm felicity,
Would be o'ercast by ennui.)
There the grosser passions cease,
All was purity and peace.

Immortal beauty with its grace.
Divinity of human face.
And light of love, which *there* could be,
Without a shade of jealousy.
To describe the Elysian Fields
Impossible—the writer yields;
No poet ever was inspired,
They must be seen to be admir'd.
Such fables taught Mythology,
Inspired by genial poetry,
All mankind believers made
In Destiny, which Gods obeyed.

We must now return to Cannæ,
After being so long away,
To wind up this fell story,
In its mantle red with glory.
Leave the slain to their hard fate,
And turn to those disconsolate.

First we'll speak of mother's grief,
(The most deserving of relief.)
Dear Mother! every urchins' breast,
Loves thee more than all the rest.
She taught him how to kneel and pray,
And chased all mischief far away.
Kiss'd off his tears, assuaged his pain,
And dream'd she had not lived in vain,
By risking her own life for joy,
Of giving life to her dear boy,
Nurtur'd on the genial flow,
Of mother's milk to live and grow.
At brave Centurion's command,
He took his spear with trembling hand;
Now kill'd by horseman or huge Gaul,
Who sneer'd to see her stripling fall,
With fierce barbaric rage,
At seventeen years of age,
Hurl'd down before his manhood's bloom,
To Heathen Purgatory's doom.

What were her thoughts on his last hour,
With wolves and vultures to devour?
Although such cases numerous were,
No words were made for her despair.

The father, selfish and astute,
Mammon his God, and his pursuit,
But had a lingering feeling left
For his children, when bereft
Of low ambitions hope for fame,
By leaving fortune with his name.
To judge the future by the past,
The pride of riches will not last,
A miser with his sordid care,
Is but a steward for his heir,
Who buys base pleasures with the pelf,
The miser seldom tastes himself;
But abstains from comforts living,
For the power at death of giving.

His heirs rejoice he cannot stay,
And cannot take his wealth away,
Goes naked as he came at birth,
Else nothing would be left on earth.
He had another heir to choose,
And worse, his property to lose,
He did the loss of son deplore,
But felt the risk of riches more;
When he was old and soon to die,
To see his wealth take fire and fly,
By plundering Gauls expected there,
The risk was more than he could bear.
He tumbled dead upon the spot,
And all his property forgot.
He was not a noble Roman,
But such men were very common.

Rome was to its centre shaken,
All believ'd it would be taken.

Now we'll leave the trembling city,
In its flood of tears and pity,
Resume the sequel of the fight,
Five thousand prisoners at night,
Made their escape and took to flight,
While weari'd guards of Allied host,
Were drunk and sleeping on their post.
They storm'd both Roman camps next day,
And all the plunder took away.
Five thousand prisoners remain'd,
Which cruel Hannibal detain'd,
And set a price upon them all,
Which must be paid, or they should fall,
As gladiators to amuse,
His army with their blood profuse;
The Roman Senate did refuse,
To pay the ransom for their men,
They slew each other in the pen,
The common fate of prisoners then.

If Hannibal deserves a curse,
The Roman Senate acted worse.
But Rome surviving loss of blood,
With speedy vengeance render'd good,
The dictum of stern Cato,
"Delenda est Cathargo."
Ruled by factious counsels bad,
The Carthagenian Senate mad,
With suicidal policy,
Recalled their troops from Italy.
The soil he held for fourteen years,
He water'd with departing tears,
(The first, as it was often said,
Great Hannibal had ever shed,)
Led his army back to Carthage,
And here we end this tiresome page.

FINIS.

NOTES TO POEM.

Note 1.—Page 15.

"As yet Vulturnus did not blow."

Vulturnus is the name of a periodical wind which blew with great violence from S. E. to N. W. The Romans faced the South, the Allies the North. This wind raised and blew fiercely during the battle against the Romans, by driving great quantities of dust and sharp sand into their faces, prevented them from seeing clearly to fight. Vulturnus is also the name of a river of Campania. The name of the wind is supposed to be derived from the Latin words, Vultus, the countenance, and verto, to turn, because it forced persons to turn their faces from it; or a compound of Latin and Greek, Vultus Latin and Greek verb τρεπω, to turn away. The River was very crooked, and the face of the beholder had to be turned about in every direction to trace its meanders.

Note 2.—Page. 15.

"The Aufidus there ran between."

Aufidus is a river of Apulia, falling into the Adriatic Sea. The Town of Cannæ was situated at the entrance of this river, which in modern geography is called Ofanto.

Note 3.—Page 16.

"In front Hastati waved the spear."

Hastati, so called from hasta, a spear, the weapon they carried in ancient times, being young soldiers and placed in front. The boys of Rome were enrolled under Centurions at seventeen years of age, who presented them with spears, and led them to the tented field in times of invasion.

Principes were men of middle age and greatest vigor, standing next behind the Hastati, and when they fell back received and supported them betwixt their ranks.

Triarii, as their name denotes, were the third rank, generally composed of veterans, who stood wide enough to receive both the Hastati and Principes betwixt their line. Owing to this formation the Roman Army was prepared to resist three successive onsets before it could be routed.

Note 4.—Page 18.

"The central *cuneus* stood out clear."

Cuneus is the Latin for a wedge. When troops were formed into the figure of an acute or obtuse angle they were styled Cuneus, which was considered the most efficient shape to pierce and break up the order and line of the enemy's army. When a Cuneus was seen in the field, a charge was generally expected from it, but in this the Romans were deceived by Hannibal at Cannæ, who contrived to draw their charge on his Cuneus, which was not more than one-third of his infantry, and by falling back from it, surrounded all their legions by his wings and line in rear, in this way threw them into confusion and cut them to pieces.

The Gauls and Spaniards, who composed the Cuneus, were very fearful to encounter on account of the size of their bodies, their prodigious strength, their expertness in the use of arms, and the imposing appearance of their dress. Their shields were nearly of the same size and fashion, reflecting the rays of the sun like polished mirrors into the eyes of the

enemy. Their swords were different both in length and form, those of the Gauls being broad and long, without points. The Gauls were naked from their waists to their helmets, with the exception of a loose red shirt. Their long beards which swept their shaggy bosoms made their aspects terrific. There was no stopping or fencing against their heavy swords, which had to be avoided entirely, or inflicted death through all defensive armour at a single blow, and hewed off a spear like a reed. This is the description given by historians of the fierce legions of Gaul. Cæsar describes them as having flaxen, or yellow hair, and says they were remarkable for their fondness of changing their generals and rulers. This personal description does not correspond with that of the modern French, but they are not all descended from the Gauls, but mostly from the Franks, and other nations. Their fondness for changing their rulers without improving their system of government, is truly characteristic of the modern French.

The Spaniards wore full suits of defensive armour, covered by shirts of dazzling whiteness, bordered with purple. As they practised fencing and thrusting more than striking, their swords were double-edged and pointed. They were of the same size and complexion as the Gauls before their adulteration by a mixture of the Moorish, not negro, blood.

The Carthagenian foot resembled the Roman Legions in almost every particular of dress and armour;—and at Cannæ were equipt with many of the weapons taken from the Romans, forty thousand of whom had been slain by Hannibal's army at Thasimenus, a short time before the battle of Cannæ.

The heavy Cavalry, mounted on Spanish stallions, was perhaps the most terrific arm of Hannibal's army. It frequently charged the Roman Legions, rode them down, and cut them to pieces. The Romans dreaded a charge of his cavalry more than the swords of his infantry, on the plains, where they could be brought to bear on them. When they charged in line at top of speed they were irresistible before the use of fire arms. The men of the Roman Legions were speared by the riders, and trodden down or kicked to death by their trained horses. Fabius dreaded the Allied cavalry so much that he took refuge with his army in the mountains to avoid their charges.

Note 5.—Page 21.

"The Balcares next unfurled."

Balcares, three Islands, so called in ancient geography, lying on the Coast of Spain, and now called Majorca, Minorca and Ivica. The word is derived from the Greek Βαλλειν, to throw, because the inhabitants of these Islands were expert slingers and archers, besides great pirates. They were mercenaries and hired by the Romans to bring on battles, by galling the enemy with their missiles. Some of them were in the service of Hannibal at the battle of Cannæ, and some historians say there was a severe skirmish betwixt the light troops on both sides, in which one of the Roman Consuls was severely wounded before the combat of horsemen. But as this account is omitted in other histories, it has been left out in the Poem, to save the trouble and time necessary to reconcile the conflicting histories. From them all slingers took the name of Balcares.

Note 6.—Page 22.

"Like charging trump of Gabriel."

Gabriel was an Angel in Heathen Mythology, considered in the same warlike character by all profane writers, except the Persians, who thought him a peaceful angel, and named him the Peacock of Heaven. The Greeks and Romans considered him the destroying angel of war who carried a trumpet to sound the Commander's order for a charge in battle. Milton uses him as the Angel of War in his Paradise Lost. He is generally considered the angel of both War and Death its consequence, who sounded his trump first to bring on a battle, and finally to announce its catastrophe. He is introduced in this double capacity at Cannæ, considering the conflict and destruction of the Knights and their auxiliaries as inevitable when he sounded Hannibal's order for the Cavalry in his rear to charge them.

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